

# Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • Sept. 11, 2020

Justin Rapp had foresight as a teen. When at the career center during sophomore tours, Justin visited the Heavy Equipment, Machining & Manufacturing and Welding programs.

He had researched industries and learned that welding was a difficult trade but there was a great need for welders.

"I wanted to learn from school, I wanted the right way to do it, the right procedures, the right prep," Justin said.

Justin is now a lead welder fabricator at Utility Truck Equipment in Circleville. Justin started at UTE on job placement while a senior at Pickaway-Ross. In addition to pursuing an in-demand trade, Justin has also benefitted from the graying of America, as a generation of tradesmen retires.

After nearly 10 years at UTE, "I'm third or fourth in seniority," Justin said. "All the guys I started out with in the shop are retired. The guy I learned from is retired."

Justin said while he was determined to learn to weld, he didn't have any experience.

"I didn't know how to weld a lick before I started at Pickaway-Ross," Justin said, crediting instructor Tommy Collier with being a great teacher.

"He instilled all the basics and made time to work with you. He'd help you if you were having trouble."

Tommy strongly returns the praise.

"Justin is a great guy. He was very driven when he was in my class and has become very successful."

In addition to working full time at UTE, Justin has applied his welding and fabrication skills in two



Justin Rapp, left and bottom left, at his workplace. Bottom right: A banner he made for Tommy Collier hangs in the Welding classroom.

other areas: J&M Custom Fabrication LLC, which he started as a side venture while still in high school, and helping out on his in-law's 2,500-acre farm.

"I've always wanted to weld and fab at home," he said. "I have a good group of friends who always have something broken and I married into a farm family and they've always got something broken."

But he hasn't forgotten where he started.

"Pickaway-Ross did a lot for me and any chance I can swing a kid in that direction I do it," he said.

"He goes out of his way to help Pickaway-Ross welding students as a mentor. He made a great banner for our welding classroom with things he learned as a student going into the field of welding," Tommy said.

Rick Ellingsworth, his supervisor at UTE, agrees.

"He is a good ambassador for Pickaway-Ross. He takes a lot of pride in his work. He's a real asset. He is definitely one to bring back into the school to tell his success story."

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